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House Passes Coast Guard Authorization Bill; *Bill Also Implements Vessel Pollution Standards*

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. House of Representatives on Thursday night approved legislation to enhance the Coast Guard’s ability to maintain the safety and security of our nation’s ports and waterways.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2006 (H.R. 5681), which authorizes funding for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2007, was introduced in the House by Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Don Young (R-Alaska), and Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee Chairman Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ).

“The Coast Guard’s legacy fleet is deteriorating at an unacceptable rate,” Chairman Young said. “We must provide the Coast Guard with new assets as fast as possible.

“This bill provides the Coast Guard with the authorities and resources it needs to accomplish its vital missions,” Young said.

“The men and women of the Coast Guard work hard to carry out the service’s missions,” Subcommittee Chairman LoBiondo said. “Each day, they protect the public and help to ensure the safety and security of the nation. They are our nation’s maritime first responders.

“H.R. 5681 authorizes over \$1.7 billion for the Coast Guard’s Integrated Deepwater System – the amount necessary to accelerate the replacement of the Coast Guard’s legacy assets from a 25-year to a 15-year schedule. As the Coast Guard’s legacy assets continue to rapidly deteriorate, service members work with the risk that the aircraft or boat they use may fail to operate. This is unacceptable. Further, it puts the safety and security of our citizens at risk. We must accelerate Deepwater,” LoBiondo said.

The Coast Guard Authorization Act of 2006

H.R. 5681 includes the following provisions:

- **Authorizes over \$9 billion for the Coast Guard for fiscal year 2007. This total includes \$1.73 billion for the Integrated Deepwater System program (Deepwater) to replace the Coast Guard’s rapidly failing assets. This funding level will accelerate the program to a 15-year timeline.**
- **Authorizes an end-of-year military strength level of 45,500 active duty personnel for fiscal year 2007.**
- **Permanently increases the Coast Guard’s allowable number of officers from 6,200 to 6,700.**

- Authorizes Coast Guard veterans to have the same access to the Armed Forces Retirement Home system as retirees from the other military services.
- Provides that Coast Guard personnel who work in support of a declaration of a major disaster or emergency by the President will be able retain up to a total of 90 days of leave when not used by the end of the fiscal year.
- Authorizes appropriations to remain available for payment beyond the year in which they are appropriated for work performed by the Coast Guard for Department of Defense military departments.
- Authorizes reimbursement of travel-related expenses to Coast Guard personnel who are stationed on an island in the continental United States when a family member is referred to a specialty care provider off-island that is less than 100 miles from the primary care provider.
- Establishes a civil penalty offense for simple possession of a controlled substance on a vessel or at a shoreside facility.
- Requires the Coast Guard to use a competitive contracting procedure to replace the Fast Response Cutter among shipyards in the United States and to manage, or have the primary contractor for the Deepwater program manage, that competitive contracting procedure.
- Requires the Commandant of the Coast Guard to direct the Superintendent of the Coast Guard Academy to develop and implement a policy on sexual harassment and violence applicable to the personnel of the Coast Guard Academy.
- Requires the Commandant of the Coast Guard to conduct a demonstration project on the methods and best practices of the use of smokestack scrubbers on cruise ships.

Legislation Also Includes Provisions Implementing International Vessel Emissions Standards

H.R. 5681 also includes provisions that will require the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency to promulgate regulations to implement vessel emission standards agreed to under Annex VI to the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL Convention).

These provisions were originally introduced as **H.R. 5811, the MARPOL Annex VI Implementation Act of 2006**, which was unanimously approved by the Committee on July 19, 2006.

The International Maritime Organization adopted Annex VI to the MARPOL Convention in 1997 which establishes international regulations that set limits on sulfur oxide and nitrogen oxide emissions from ship exhausts and prohibit deliberate emissions of ozone depleting substances. In April of this year, the Senate acceded to the treaty by unanimous consent. Annex VI entered into force on May 19, 2006 for the 36 member nations that have ratified the treaty.

The provisions included in H. R. 5681:

- Clarify the roles of the Coast Guard and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) role in developing, administering and enforcing regulations to carry out MARPOL Annex VI.
- Require all vessels operating within the territorial sea (the belt of the oceans extending out to a distance of 12 miles from shore) and in special emission control areas to comply with air emission regulations.
- Require engines that are installed on covered vessels to meet standards under Annex VI regarding nitrogen oxide, sulfur oxide, and other organic compounds.
- Require ports and terminals to comply with requirements to provide receptacles or access to reception facilities where ozone depleting substances and other materials can be disposed of.

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